Building a Culture of Patient Safety

Ebola Serves as a Reminder for All

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Overview

The drama that has played out in a Dallas, Texas hospital around patient, staff and public safety in treating the deadly Ebola virus illustrates how critical a healthcare leaders role in preparing their facilities can become. We know from this case that there were errors in communication between nurses and physicians in the emergency room leading to a missed diagnosis and delay in admission for a patient. We were informed that entries in the electronic medical record may not have been available for physician review prior to discharge from the ER. We have learned that there was uncertainty about the appropriate isolation protocols and the appropriate personal protective equipment staff should wear as well as potential lapses in technique in donning and removing the personal protective suits. There was miscommunication with staff regarding travel restrictions resulting in school closures in two states, an airplane being taken out of service and persons being directed to stay at home with monitoring for 21 days. These events happened in a highly regarded medical center with highly qualified staff and a record of meeting or exceeding all of the standards for care.

Is this news?

We should not be surprised! Every year, 400,000 patients die due to avoidable errors in American hospitals. The most recent estimate reported in the September 2013 Journal of Patient Safety by John T. James, Ph. D. includes errors of commission (doing something wrong), errors of omission (failure to do the right thing), errors of communication, errors of context and diagnostic errors. This number is equal to the entire population of Oakland, California or the number of American casualties during World War II or the equivalent of 2797 fully loaded Boeing 737-700 airplanes crashing without survivors each year. If reported, avoidable deaths in hospitals would be the 3rd leading cause of death in the U.S., trailing only heart disease and cancer.

Healthcare in U.S. hospitals is complex and demanding. There are constant changes in scientific knowledge, new drugs, new treatment regimens, new technology and best practice guidelines that challenge these organizations to stay current. There are demands on staff caused by workload, turnover, communications gaps, training requirements and ever changing documentation and compliance expectations. Despite these hurdles, some health systems and hospitals have made great strides to improve the safety of their patients.

Since 1999 and the Institute of Medicine report To Err is Human, a large number of organizations have formed to provide guidelines, best practices, data and scorecards to assist healthcare leaders in their patient safety efforts. But, the goal of reducing mortality from avoidable error remains unmet. There is common agreement that the issues preventing improvement in patient safety are communications, failure to implement interoperable systems, failure to follow established protocols and central to all the above, the failure to implement a Culture of Patient Safety.

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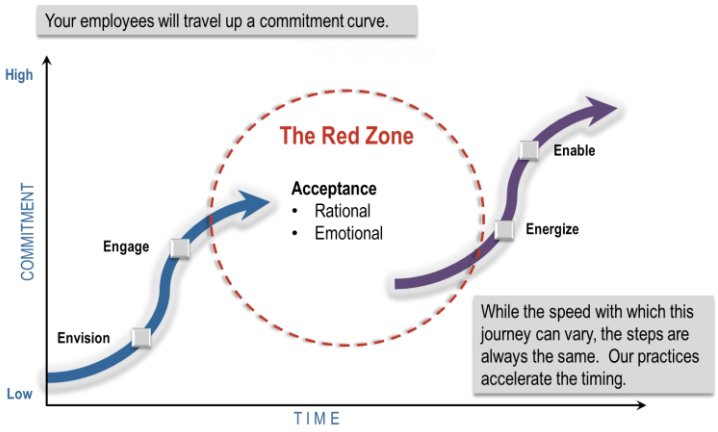
The lack of a Culture of Patient Safety is a leadership challenge that healthcare leaders can tackle. Accepting nearly 1,100 avoidable patient deaths a day in our hospitals is an unsustainable position. Tools and guidelines are available from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Institute of Medicine, the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, the Leapfrog Group and others.



How You Can Accelerate Change?

This type of cultural transformation often requires a significant degree of change. From job responsibilities to roles, a culture of patient safety requires employees to behave in a different way. As this Chinese character demonstrates, there is a contrast between danger (upper character) and opportunity (lower character). This suggests that change management can either lead to a high degree of resistance or a significant opportunity – when managed correctly.

We've outlined below a series of key strategic questions to help you determine the potential roadblocks in your way. This will guide your planning in terms of the level of effort required.

When:

- While organizational change is being considered or during initial planning
- Before the change has been announced
- After the announcement has been made
- After the project implementation is completed

Why:

- To provide early warning for potential resistance problems
- To determine the employee's predisposition toward the change
- To analyze any resistance that may develop during implementation
- To identify the nature of resistance problems after the implementation is complete

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Change Readiness Assessment

Rank your efforts based on the items below. A higher score means that resistance is potentially high and requires a greater level of effort.

Change Resistance Factors	Score
The purpose of the change is not made clear	
The targets do not see the need for change	
The targets are not involved in planning	
There is poor communication regarding the change	
The "cost" is too high or the reward inadequate	
The compatibility of the change against organizational values is perceived to be low	
Key people in the organization are not seen as advocates for the change	
The targets perceive a negative reaction to their social interactions	
The targets perceive inadequate support for making the change possible	
Employees perceive a negative impact on operating budgets	
Change is introduced too quickly or too slowly	
Habit patterns are ignored	
Key job characteristics are changed	
Employees have been exposed to poorly managed change in the past	
There is a fear of failure	
There is a tendency to seek security in the past	
The targets lack confidence in their ability to execute the change	
There is a lack of respect and trust in the sponsor	
There is a lack of respect and trust in the change agent	
Excessive pressure is involved	
Vested interests are involved	
There is confusion surrounding the organizational objectives of the change	
The status quo cannot be reestablished is the change proves unacceptable	

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For more information about how we help healthcare organizations evolve their cultures to achieve real business visit our website at www.endeavormgmt.com/healthcare.

About Endeavor

Endeavor Management, is an international management consulting firm that collaboratively works with their clients to achieve greater value from their transformational business initiatives. Endeavor serves as a catalyst by providing pragmatic methodologies and industry expertise in Transformational Strategies, Operational Excellence, Organizational Effectiveness, and Transformational Leadership.

Our clients include those responsible for:

- Business Strategy
- Marketing and Brand Strategy
- Operations
- Technology Deployment
- Strategic Human Capital
- Corporate Finance

The firm's 40 year heritage has produced a substantial portfolio of proven methodologies, deep operational insight and broad industry experience. This experience enables our team to quickly understand the dynamics of client companies and markets. Endeavor's clients span the globe and are typically leaders in their industry.

Gelb Consulting, a wholly owned subsidiary, monitors organizational performance and designs winning marketing strategies. Gelb helps organizations focus their marketing initiatives by fully understanding customer needs through proven strategic frameworks to guide marketing strategies, build trusted brands, deliver exceptional experiences and launch new products.